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THE MEANING OF TOTAL DEFENSE

by Karl Olsen

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Mr. Olsen is a native of North Dakota who has traveled extensively in England, Scandinavia, Central Europe, the Far East and the Near East during recent years between periods of study at the University of Southern California, Yale, and Cambridge University in England. He has lived and talked with all classes of people in the countries he has visited. His observations in Germany extended over a two-year period prior to the war and in Scandinavia, England, and France from the spring of 1939 to June 1940.

His description of the rise of Nazi Germany effectively describes what total war is and what total defense must be. American defense and the part which agriculture plays in it is one of the most important considerations for farmers at this time. Because this article throws light on how farmers and all other citizens may help in America's preparedness, I suggest that AAA committeemen read Mr. Olsen's statement.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. M. Evans".

R. M. Evans,
Administrator

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In order to understand our world today it is necessary to understand Germany. We cannot understand Germany today without recalling, however briefly, something of the Germany between the Armistice and Hitler's appointment to the Reich Chancellorship in 1933.

The immediate post-war Germany was a nation humiliated by defeat, stripped of its power, starved by the English blockade, ruined by inflation, burdened with reparations, hampered by high tariffs, bereft of its possessions and markets, and torn from Munich to Berlin by all manner of internal strife. It was a nation that came through the ordeal of a terrible four years' war only to face a seemingly hopeless future. It was this kind of a Germany which stumbled into the "democratic" period of the Weimar Constitution.

With the defeat of Germany, the old ruling classes had been discredited but were by no means powerless. The Social Democrats, frightened and unprepared, had power handed to them because there was no alternative group, no alternative way outside of revolution itself.

The laboring classes, terribly hit by the economic disorganization of the war and the peace, were torn between "red" revolution and loyalty to their old trade union leaders who feared such a revolution because they had a stake in the existing system.

The Social Democratic leaders, faced with disunity and uprising, unable to rely on their labor following, had to employ the conservatives and reactionaries organized into "Frei Corps" to put down these disturbances on the part of their own people. In this manner a bitterness was sown between the social-democratic leaders and the communist left that was to weaken the German labor movement so as to leave it prey to the Nazi revolution of 1933.

The Social Democrats were afraid to inaugurate even desperately needed reforms. They were afraid to break up the vast estates of the East Prussian Junkers, to crush the Brown Shirts in the early days, or to expropriate the reactionary leaders of industry like Krupp. They dared not appeal to the more radical groups of labor, they spoke in whispers of "The Catastrophe," and tried to patch and mend and hold on as best they might.

The middle classes were almost wiped out by inflation. Their little businesses were threatened by big business and they lived in insecurity and fear lest they lose their position in society and be forced into the ranks of the proletariat or worse still, the destitute unemployed.

The leaders of industry, faced with an impoverished shrunken country, deprived of markets through tariff barriers, and in constant fear of revolt from below, cast around for a means of saving themselves; some of them finally turning to Adolf Hitler and his party as

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

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the means of their salvation.

For 10 years or so Germany was kept alive by borrowing money, chiefly from the United States. With the collapse of the "Credit Anstalt" in Vienna and the rapidly deepening depression of 1929 and the 30's, Germany found herself in almost the same position she had known in 1919.

Depression, unemployment, unrest, formed a background for one hopeless governmental change after another. Germany was drifting aimlessly in the storms that were sweeping the world, and Weimar Germany was essentially unseaworthy.

In the space then of a living man's memory monarchy and democracy had both seemingly failed, and the German upper class, the German industrialist, the German middle class, and the German lower middle class saw themselves facing a hopeless future, ruin, and ultimate "red revolution" that probably would sweep them all away.

Meanwhile the Brown Shirts had been gaining strength. To the army and Junker groups Hitler promised a powerfully armed Germany; to the industrialists Hitler promised protection from the left and the smashing of the trade unions; to the middle classes Hitler promised the protection of small business from big business; and to all of Germany Hitler promised unity from endless strife. A new third Reich would now be created to restore once again the position, the might and power of Germany.

Germany had been defeated, Germany had failed, yes, said Hitler but only because there were enemies within her gates - the Jews! To the defeated, dispirited German people would now come new hope, for within these same German people lay the promise of the rulership of the world, the seeds of destiny. One Fuehrer, one Reich, one Folk, Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!

Hitler had thus promised large sections of German society everything while promising them nothing. There was a section which believed Hitler was the Messiah. Others argued, Why not give the fellow a chance? The big industrialist argued: "We can always get rid of him when we want to, we can use him as a bridge for the restoration of the monarchy, he will be useful in keeping a too-red working class in their place."

The middle class mass was not opposed. Hitler at least was a bulwark against communism. Even the workers failed to see what it all might mean. As late as 1934 the communists in their hatred for the Social-Democrats failed to see a greater danger.

Hitler did not receive full power, but he quickly attained it. Key posts were rapidly seized by the Nazis. The Minister of Police in Prussia yielded to a "show of force" thinking to bring the Nazis

before the Supreme Court for a violation of the Constitution. Those who would not yield peaceably were disposed of by other means.

The first task of the Third Reich was to avenge the Versailles Treaty and to restore to Germany a position of power and prestige. This objective could be achieved only by a heavily armed Germany; the history of the Weimar Republic had proved that.

The rearmament of Germany meant the reorganization of the whole of German life on a total-war basis, for the obstacles to rearmament were numerous. Time was precious; France was fully armed and suspicious; Germany was relatively poor and disorganized economically; Germany's position in foreign trade was not favorable; rearmament would mean a progressively falling standard of living; the country was rife with discontent. How to whip Germany into a coordinated, highly geared military machine; how to impose the necessary unity demanded by such a machine, this was the fundamental problem of the Nazis.

First of all the trade unions were liquidated. The split between the Social-Democrats and the Communists had badly weakened labor, the depression had accentuated weaknesses, and the extraordinary unawareness which had blinded the laboring groups as well as all other groups to what Naziism really meant, saw the whole seemingly imposing German labor organization go under almost without a struggle.

The liquidation of the trade unions was necessary for three reasons: First, the trade unions were active centers of opposition to Nazism; second, Hitler's industrial backers had been promised trade union liquidation as a price for their support. Profits demanded the driving down of labor costs to a minimum. The unions, as a fortress of labor rights, had to be destroyed. Third, rearmament meant a rapidly falling standard of living. The trade unions as an organized opposition to any such policy had to go.

Hitler had promised the middle classes protection from big business, but little was done about the chain stores, one of the chief grievances of the little businessman. The little businessman did, however, see his Jewish competitors ruined and driven out of business, but this did not materially improve his lot. Finally a considerable portion of middle-class businesses were liquidated by governmental order. They were too inefficient for the war economy. What businesses remained were left to struggle along under heavy taxation, shortage of supply, and rigid governmental control.

The industrialists secured the smashing of the trade unions, but the industrialist learned as well that he was not the master of his own house. Private enterprise had little place in a war economy. The sole end of German economy was military power, not profit. Private enterprise must manufacture a commodity at a heavy loss, if necessary, if that commodity was necessary for rearmament. Private

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enterprise must be heavily taxed and minutely controlled for the war machine. In foreign trade the individual had no say. Foreign trade was controlled by the State. The chief consideration of foreign trade was to secure vital war supplies, to gain control of strategic positions in the internal economy of neighboring nations, and through this control to exert powerful political pressure on the victim. This very often meant buying on the dearest market and selling on the cheapest. Block currency and barter replaced the older methods of private trading with unregulated currency.

Under Agricultural Minister Darré the farmer was assured the possession of his land. The land was to pass to the farmer's oldest son, and so on from oldest son to oldest son. The farm could not be sold or given away; it must always remain in the family. The farmer, like the laborer and the industrialist, existed for the total-war machine. Only those crops could be planted which the war machine demanded, and prices for those crops were regulated by the Government. The shadow of serfdom had fallen on the German farmer.

Since the output of German industry was limited and since the supply of raw materials was even more limited, civilian needs had to be sacrificed everywhere. Nazism meant the rapid falling of living standards for the mass of the German people so that already before the war rationing and all customary restrictions of war had well begun in Germany.

It was out of the internal strife and conflict of Weimar Germany that Nazism had been created and risen to power. Under Nazism itself still more discontent had been engendered. Hitler had both a positive and a negative program to meet this opposition.

To a nation that had lost its pride, its feeling of significance and meaning, Hitler gave significance and meaning.

The failures of Germany were blamed on the Jew, the omnipresent enemy, the corrupter of the Aryan race. The German people were told that disaster had fallen upon them only because they had tolerated the Jew.

The defeated German people were told over and over again that they were history's chosen people and that under the Fuehrer they would achieve not only their former proud position but the rule and dominion of all the earth.

To a cynical despairing youth, Hitler promised hardship, sacrifices, and death, but an imperishable immortality in the new Third Reich; to skeptical youth, Hitler gave the certainty of a simple dogma; to a youth filled with desire to believe, Hitler gave faith and the ample chance to die for that faith. German youth was told that it

was youth not age that must save Germany. Germany was young and the "old must die."

German youth organizations were taken over, expanded, and re-organized into propaganda centers. German music, German youth's love of wandering over the countryside with his knapsack, German youth's love of the romantic, were captured and were woven tightly into the Nazi program.

All German youths regardless of class were required to spend six months doing manual labor in the "Arbeiter" camps. A German youth of promise if he were an ardent Nazi could rise high in the German state regardless of his origin.

The German farmer was told that in his veins ran the purest Aryan blood. He was the salt of the Third Reich. This new and glorious status perhaps made up somewhat for bad farm prices.

The factory owner was fuehrer in his own factory, but outside working hours he was merely a member of a brown shirt squad under the command of one of his own workmen. The fall in wages for a laborer was thus compensated now and then by a rise in status.

The average little shopkeeper could become a party leader. He could stone the stores of his Jewish competitors, wear a uniform, and feel that he was one of the superior race of men, a race of men destined to rule mankind.

Every trick of psychology was utilized to the full. It had long been known that men in mobs, regardless of intellectual accomplishment, could be emotionally swayed. The elaborate stage settings of meetings, the endless masses of brown uniforms, the lighting effects, the simple hypnotic slogans, all of these things were coldbloodedly used to induce hypnosis, hysteria, fanaticism.

But Hitler had other means as well for securing unity. An elaborate technique of repression and terror was instituted. Every institution of society, the family, the church, the trade union, the professional association, cultural bodies, were undermined and destroyed, for men in groups give each other warmth, courage, and determination. The objective of the Nazi regime was to reduce every man to a unit, so that he had only his isolation, his loneliness, and his fear. Fathers could not trust their sons, one worker could not trust another, the farmer stood in fear of his laborers, a man could be sent to a concentration camp if his neighbor went to the police to tell stories, true or untrue. Underground organizations were rooted out and horribly destroyed, one after another. Effective opposition became almost impossible and finally hope of opposition began to die in most men's hearts.

All avenues of information were closed and only propaganda

remained. The outside world became an unknown thing, full of enemies. Men became either fanatics, or fell into dull and hopeless apathy. One can hold millions of people in check by such techniques!

Germany, since 1934, has been fighting a war not only against the democracies, but against civilization and decency. Her success has been due to two things; First, the ruthless securing of cohesion and unity in her own ranks; second, the "playing upon" the disunity in the ranks of her neighbors.

Germany has utilized her foreign trade to secure political advantage. A business concern in a South American country, let us say, has made enormous momentary profits in her trade with Germany. Germany has then threatened to trade with another concern unless this company discharge all employees unfavorable to Germany and unless this company through its advertising puts pressure on the press for favorable treatment of Germany. Finally, when Germany has several large companies in her power she demands that they exert pressure on their governments to secure measures favorable to her. Sometimes, she then secures almost a complete control of a small nation, threatening it with economic ruin if it doesn't come across. The country thus threatened can't suddenly trade with someone else. There are probably few alternative markets, and furthermore, if it does change, it will lose all the credit it has accumulated in Berlin for goods sold. Thus another nation becomes a vassal of the German state without so much as a single soldier being used.

Germany has utilized the conservative fear of Bolshevism in the democracies and elsewhere. Representing herself as a bulwark against "Red" revolution she threatens again and again, "Let me have my way or else the Communists will get you." Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and France have been won by Germany's utilization of this technique, for some Spaniards, Austrians, Czechs, and Frenchmen will be traitors to protect their property from actual or imagined danger.

Germany now dominates one of the most potentially powerful empires in history, but she cannot stop there. For fear—fear of any remaining opposition—drives her to dispose of every possible enemy. As long as one powerful nation remains, it is a political threat to Germany which cannot be tolerated.

What can we in the United States do about this threat?

First, we must, in our total-defense program see that our own Nation is unified. We cannot have this unity which is essential for even a semblance of effective defense if we tolerate unemployment, idle industrial plants, the weakening of labor standards, false economizing of the farm program, unnecessary sacrifice of consumers' income, discrimination against Negroes and new immigrant groups, or appeasement on the part of industrialists for the sake of European trade. Unity will

demand sacrifices but there must be equal sacrifice on the part of all groups in the Nation.

To unify America there must be an ideal for which all classes of people are willing to work and sacrifice. Hitler offered Germany the ideal of the Third Reich. Our own ideal, which is far stronger than Germany's, is the historic American dream of America as the land of opportunity for the common man. It is the ideal of a true democracy for America, a democracy which will demand the end of inequality and abuse in our present system, a democracy that will demand an end to the domination of our national life by small selfish groups. Such a democracy will demand an end to the practices that have caused many of our youth to describe America as a "racket" for the benefit of a few. Our American unity, freely imposed, will demand hardship and sacrifice, but it will promise and it will accomplish the fulfillment of our dream for an American way of life dedicated to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all citizens.

Secondly, we must see to our position in Latin America. The challenge of a German economic penetration and control in South America must be met. The danger here is that Germany will gain political domination over Latin America through trade deals with the individual republics. To meet this danger we can no longer leave our own trade relations with Latin America to the haphazard and unorganized efforts of private traders. We must formulate our own plan of commercial co-operation with Latin America which will protect this hemisphere from the threat of totalitarian domination.

This raises difficult problems, and no one would advocate dumping the surplus products of Latin America in our own market. But a way must be found to insure that Hitler, through competitive bidding, does not get his foodstuffs for nothing and insure the success of his political penetration as well.

Even if the United States were to throw the whole of the Argentine wheat surplus into the ocean and subsidize our own surplus commodities to the hilt, it would cost us less than having to provide for an adequate defense of the Panama Canal. No two-ocean navy, no Maginot Line dug across the South American continent, can give us adequate protection in a South America dominated through trade by Berlin. Let us recognize this before it's too late.

There are two things we must do. We must take vigorous measures to secure our own self-imposed unity at home by an appeal to a whole-hearted application of true American democracy. We must take effective economic and military measures for the defense of the Americas by the creation of an adequate army and navy by setting up machinery for the protection of the whole economic life of Latin America. This would place us and our American neighbors in a position to dictate to Hitler on our terms for the supplies he must have before he succeeds in making himself entirely self-sufficient. Should we neglect our unity here, and our security in Latin America, we shall slowly, yet not so slowly as some imagine, fall victims to the fate that is being meted out to most of Europe.

